Anecdotes of Taft.

There is absolutely no false pride about Mr. Taft. He can see himself as others—even the cartoonist—see him, and laughs as heartily as anyone at a joke on himself. No pomposity; no demagogue.

An incident illustrates this: He was seated on a shaded bench overlooking the St. Lawrence River one day, his mind deep in some war papers which the government had forwarded him from Washington. Looking up, he espied an old woman standing on his porch.

"You spikka Inglees?" she asked. Little but the French Canadian patois is spoken at Murray Bay.

"No," answered "M'sieu Taft," as the natives up there call him; "we want nothing to-day." She did not understand.

Shaking his head vigorously, he repeated: "No want!" Then he went back to his papers. In about five minutes a shadow fell across his tabie, and this time a one-eyed man with farm truck was seeking his attention.

"Well, what have you got?" queried Mr. Taft, in his easy tones.

"Chickee, peegee (pigeons)), potatoes——" began the man. The Secretary laid down his documents and went over to the vendor's wagon. There he poked around among the stuff, but he did not find anything that he liked, and so he called to Mrs. Taft to come and tell the man in French that there was "nothing doing."

—

Perhaps it was when Justice Harlan, who hails from Kentucky, was looking around Murray Bay for mint and some of the things that go with it that Mr. Taft told this story.

"Justice Harlan used to have a sort of valet down South before the war, you know," said Mr. Taft. "He was a darkey, and his name was Jackson. Jackson never used the first person singular—he always said 'we,' and he had an eye for the health of 'Marse John,'" (here Mr. Taft pointed at the justice) "and he believed in moderation. Well, one night Marse John came home in the rain. He was drenched and felt he needed something. He knew there would be a protest, but he called out: 'Hey, you, Jackson! I'm wet to the skin and cold all through; bring me something to warm me up.'

"Jackson went off wagging his head in protest, but came back with a toddy.

"'That's a powerful weak drink for a man like me,' said Marse John.

"'It hain't more'n moderately strong,' Jackson admitted. 'Yo' see, Marse John, I kinder 'lowed as how we was taperin' off.'"

—

When Mr. Taft traveled from Seattle to the Philippines his time was much occupied in preparing the speech he would deliver at the opening of the First National Assembly. After he had visited Manila and had delivered his frank, outspoken message to the islanders, he put in all his time, from Manila to Vladivostok, writing his huge report on all that happened in the far Eastern islands, and, so far was this report from being completed when he left Berlin three weeks later that he used most of the thirteen days it took to cross the Atlantic in finishing the work. Mr. Fred Carpenter, his secretary, had been left behind in Germany for a two weeks' vacation. Mr. Taft wrote out the report in longhand.

Mrs. Taft, once seeing him laboring over this document, said:

"Will, why on earth don't you quit?"

The big man looked up with a laugh: "Well," he answered, "it's a good policy to make your reports extra long, so folks won't read them and find out your mistakes."

Somebody asked him then if that rule applied to the President's message, and he merely shrugged his shoulders and laughed again.

—

Mr. Taft's favorite pastime is golf, and he is never too tired to play the game or to listen to any interesting discussion of it. At times when he is on the subject he seems a big, enthusiastic boy, unspoiled by the carking cares of the world. He may, previously, have been discoursing on some political question which has left its mark of worry about his eyes and mouth, but just let someone remark:

"Saw a great game of golf the other day, Mr. Taft," and, presto, the change of expression comes quick as a flash of lightning.

"You did?" says Taft. "Where?" And then the fun begins. When the other man gets through with his story, then Mr. Taft is all ready to start out on a little golf story of his own, and there is no one who can tell a better story—fish or golf—than Mr. Taft.

"It's the greatest game man ever invented," Mr. Taft declares, enthusiastically. "There are games and games—stuffy indoor games and a few outdoor games—but there never was one which could come up with this favorite of mine. It rests me more than sleep, and when I am playing I forget that I am hungry, and that"—he winks—"is a great thing when a man is as fat as I am." Then he laughs one of those hearty, contagious laughs of his, sobering almost instantly afterward, as is his habit.

Robert Lee Dunn, who traveled as photographer with Mr. Taft around the world, tells of Mr. Taft's bravery under pain. It was at a review of the troops at Fort Snelling, Minn. Says Dunn:

Mr. Taft was very thorough with his review. It was not mere formality with him by any means. He inspected everything down to the pack train with great care. When the review was over he climbed into a motor car, and—though it was a piping hot day—put on an overcoat. Turning up his collar, he gave the word to start.

"One moment, please," said the camera man.

"All right," answered Mr. Taft, "but please be quick," and turning toward the comera, he tried to smile. It was the ghastliest attempt to appear at ease that I ever saw; a weird, heart-rending effort, and without a vestige of the joyousness that we had seen in his countenance the night before. We only looked and wondered, for none of us knew of the mortal agony the Secretary was enduring behind that courageous mask.

Some thirty minutes later, when Mr. Taft had reached the house of a friend, where he was a guest, a bulletin was issued stating that though the Secretary was then resting easily, it would be necessary to cancel all of his immediate engagements. He was suffering from ptomaine poisoning, a bit of fish having done the mischief, and, as the Secretary said, "the larger the corporation, the greater the capacity for pain."

—

President Taft was once fishing with a party of friends in Canada, and just because he could outdo the most vigorous of them in the woods or along the stream they decided they would get something up on him.

They bribed the French Canadian guide to take Mr. Taft into the woods and lose him. The guide was as tough as a pine knot. He lived in the woods and was as tireless as an Indian. He entered into the spirit of the joke and agreed to earn his money.

The President was led into the upper reaches of the trout stream, and after a while the guide announced "We are lost." In the all-day effort to recover their bearings the guide and Mr. Taft tramped through tangled underbrush, climbed over fallen trees, waded through marshes; but Mr. Taft would not get tired. The guide held out doggedly until finally night came on. Then he suddenly found his way into camp.

The conspiring friends were waiting to receive Mr. Taft, prepared to triumph over his discomfiture and exhaustion. But he swung into camp calling for a square meal in a hurry. He admitted that he was a little bit tired, but he was as cheerful as ever. Behind him tottered the guide—a veritable wreck. The conspirators gave up, and allowed that Mr. Taft was as tireless at play as he was at work.

—

The picture of President Roosevelt on horseback, leaping six-rail fences, or galloping at breakneck speed over hill and dale, is familiar to everyone. You never saw such a picture of Mr. Taft, though, and there is just one reason for this. He never did such a thing. The President-elect has too much compassion for the horse to expect him to leap six-rail fences and jump rivers with more than 300 pounds up. Mr. Taft always manages to sit his horse if he happens to become fractious, for he has learned the art of riding from men who are among the world's best riders—the United States army's cavalry. When Secretary of War, Mr. Taft's orderly, who usually accompanied him on his rides, was a horseman surpassed by none. He could ride any horse that ever champed a bit; he could ride standing up, lying down, or any way in which a horse can be ridden.

Mr. Taft was always delighted to watch his orderly while doing "stunts" on his horse, although he never attempted any of them himself. He has always been perfectly satisfied to take his morning and evening gallop on the flat. To horseback riding Mr. Taft attributes a reduction in his weight, and this exercise and the fresh air he gets constitute the principal reason for his adoption of the saddle as a recreation.

Taft loves horses and probably knows enough about them to suit his own ends, but it is not likely that he will ever have the distinction enjoyed by Mr. Root, who is credited with owning the finest horses in Washington, where fine steeds for every purpose are to be seen in the streets every day.

—

It was not often that Judge Taft showed anger, but when he did there was nothing half-hearted about it. A man who had heard some idle talk about Taft came to tell the judge of it. People were saying, he asserted, that Taft would not do full justice to one side in a pending case. "You get out of here or I'll throw you out," he shouted. As a matter of fact, the case was not before Taft's court. He hated a meddler. He would not tolerate a tattler.

"Charlie," Mrs. Taft was once overheard to say at table, "you haven't observed that there is a conspicuous tract of ground in the neighborhood of your ear, have you?" Charlie gazed into space, his countenance depicting that profound melancholy that comes to the juvenile consciousness upon the realization of the utter futility of all mundane effort.

Observing this, Mr. Taft said, "Oh, we won't be too hard on him. I guess he likes fixing up about as much as I do. I'm most despondent, too, with all this clothes changing every time a function comes along."

—

One of the shadows upon the life of Mr. Taft was his enforced absence from this country upon state business when his mother died. Between mother and son the strongest bond of sympathy and love existed.

This can best be illustrated, perhaps, by an incident that happened at Havana at the time when Mr. Taft was there to straighten out the affairs of the turbulent little republic.

"Mr. Taft," stated a newspaper dispatch of the day, "sat in a small room overlooking the sea. He looked tired and worn. Many men crowded about him, most of them correspondents for American newspapers.

"When the crowd of writing men had arranged themselves in a rough semicircle in front of his desk, Mr. Taft beckoned to the representative of a Boston daily, on the outer edge of the crowd, to come around and sit beside him. 'I am anxious that this young man should hear everything,' he said, in explanation of his partiality. 'He writes for the only paper that my mother reads, and I like her to know what I'm doing down here.' There was something fine in the unconsciousness and simplicity of the man's speech and attitude of mind."

—

Two Chinamen in Shanghai were discussing the President-elect's visit to that place after the departure of the Taft party.

"Mr. Taft is certainly a very big man," said one, making a gesture that implied a large circle as he spoke.

"He is that," answered the other. "We have certainly had a considerable sphere of American influence in our midst recently."

And yet they say the Chinaman has no sense of humor.

—

Mr. Taft, in the Philippines, preferred to ride a mule, because, he explained, a horse usually saw him first and mutinied, but the mule would stand it a couple of days before showing he preferred not to be ridden. He once kept a formal and gorgeous dinner waiting until he made sure that his hard-worked mule had been fed.

The story, much to the credit of his humaneness, was known to a Minnesota mayor whose observation of mules had been limited to the smaller breeds. He asked Mr. Taft how big his mule was.

"Oh," indicating the lowest button on his vest, "about so high. Weighed about 150 pounds, I should judge."

The mayor had the ray of light which missed Judge Harlan.

"Mr Taft," he remarked solemnly, "I believe you're a nature-faker."

So he was, too, for the mules he rode in the Philippines were big and mighty beasts.

—

Mr. Taft's first visit to Panama, in the year 1905, is an event which will never be forgotten by those so vitally interested in the construction of the Panama Canal. He himself declares he does not know exactly how he happened to go. He awoke one morning with the feeling that something was going to happen. He got up, dressed, had his breakfast, and his customary morning chat with his wife, and prepared to go down town. On the way to his office he got into a street car discussion concerning the canal. Just what the question was concerning it Mr. Taft cannot exactly remember; anyhow, he has a clear recollection of saying:

"I'll prove it. I'll start this very day." There was a hand-shake, and Mr. Taft took the return car home, packed up his things, and started that night for the Isthmus of Panama.

Word was telegraphed to the isthmus that he was on his way, and great were the preparations made for his reception. When he arrived he was greeted with all the pomp and ceremony that would have been extended to the President himself. Flags were flying, and children were singing. The air was sweet with the breath of flowers, and signs of jubilation were visible on every hand. When the Secretary of War landed a medley of bands started to play. School children, robed in white, rushed forward to scatter flowers in his path. Crowds shouted, and there was a wealth of sound and color everywhere. After his reception had been properly recognized, Mr. Taft lost no time in entering into the work of investigation. He started in with a vim which had a great deal to do with stimulating the interest of all those concerned, and went through the thing with thorough enjoyment and the push that marks all of his movements.

At one place on tour as War Secretary Mr. Taft was inspecting a cavalry post. A company rode by in somewhat broken alignment, in sympathy, evidently, with its captain, who was manifestly badly rattled. The trouble proved contagious, for the officer of the day, who rode by Mr. Taft, also became confused, spurring this way and that and giving hysterical and contradictory orders. The Secretary understood at once, and looking over the parade ground, said:

"Never mind, major, that's only human nature. We won't let trifles bother us."

Not many days later this same major was journeying northward with Mr. Taft and was standing on the rear platform with the Secretary, who was making a speech to a small but enthusiastic crowd. "In this beautiful State of Iowa," Mr. Taft was saying, when the major, having more regard for precision of statement than for the Secretary's feelings, leaned forward and whispered very audibly: "South Dakota, Mr. Secretary—South Dakota. We've been in South Dakota the last four hours."

—

While Mr. Taft was governor general of the Philippines he made a great many friends, and a few enemies. Most of his enemies were men who wanted to shirk their duties as civilians or to relax the severity of military discipline in respect to their favorites. Mr. Taft doesn't like a shirker, and he will not play any favorites in official matters, though he is one of the kindest-hearted men in the world.

In the military affairs of the islands a certain officer was ordered to sail from his easy berth in the United States for duty in Luzon. Of course, the officer was not anxious to go, and immediately set to work in Washington all the influence he could bring to bear to relieve him of the unpleasant task set before him. But after all the wire-pulling had been exhausted he was finally referred to Mr. Taft. So, one of the officer's friends called upon the governor general and advanced several good excuses, finally playing his trump card, as follows:

"You know this is an awful climate for a white man," he declared. "It is hot and it is unhealthy. The colonel cannot stand it here. Why, you know he is fat. He weighs more than 250 pounds. It would be an absolute punishment to bring him over here."

"Yes," said Taft, thoughtfully.

"Further than that, he would be in danger of his life here—a fat man like that."

Taft took a thoughtful survey of his own huge frame, and, turning to the applicant, with a quizzical smile, asked:

"Did Taft die?"

The colonel went to the Philippines.

—

Toward the end of his career as a Federal judge, a young man was convicted in his court of violating the postal laws. Judge Taft was convinced that the offense was due more to ignorance than to criminal intent, and he suspended sentence. "Come back to me in six months," he said to the defendant.

The Philippine war was on when the six months expired. The young fellow who had been convicted appeared before Judge Taft with the laconic introduction, "I've come."

"I see you have," said his honor, "but what can I do for you?"

Judge Taft had nearly forgotten the circumstance, but it was recalled to his recollection by attaches of the court. Then he put the young man through an examination as to what he had been doing in the probationary period, and received satisfactory answers.

"And what are you doing now?" he asked.

"I am trying to get into the army," was the answer.

"Will they take you?"

"I think so, but I told them I couldn't enlist until I'd seen you."

"Well," said Judge Taft, "you show yourself to me with Uncle Sam's uniform on and you needn't come after that."

The boy enlisted and his sentence was remitted.

—

Although Mr. Taft is tireless, and although fishing is one of his favorite pastimes, he is not regarded as an expert fisherman by extreme sportsmen who make a science of casting the fly. He is not so good a fisherman as Grover Cleveland was. He has been thought to resemble Cleveland, allowing for the difference in ages, by superficial observers. But there is little of real similarity between the two men.

In this respect Mr. Taft is much like Cleveland: He does not like to dictate his letters to a stenographer and always does as much as possible of his particular correspondence with his own hand. Like the writing of Mr. Cleveland, that of President Taft is in a small, feminine hand that would suggest anything but the big man behind it. His autograph is in enormous demand, and he is good natured about giving it.

In the peaceful and benevolent assimilation of the Philippines nothing has ever been so potent as the personality of Mr. Taft, the former governor-general. Taft was just the sort of man the Filipinos needed to reconcile them to American rule. His big human qualities, his strength, and even his corpulency, endeared him to the natives.

The simple-hearted children of the Orient had been chilled by the dignity of the Spanish officials. But Taft, with his loud, hearty laughter, his cordial handshake, his beaming face, traveled about the islands creating good will wherever he went.

When Taft went into the province of Bulacan to introduce civil government, he naturally inquired for the most prominent citizen of the place, who proved to be a former captain of volunteers and a former presidente, Senator Jose Serapio. The senator was oozing dignity. He was uniformed like a bandmaster, and he had medals pinned all over his chest. He expected to see the great American governor coming with resplendent ceremonies and in gorgeous array. But Taft came along in a suit of light linen, and when he was introduced to the grandee he grabbed him by the hand and said "Howdy" in the most approved American manner.

Taft appointed the senator governor of that province, and when he appeared to take charge of his office the natives were surprised to see him in plain white clothes. He had laid aside his dignity with his uniform, and went around shaking hands and saying "Howdy! Glad to see you."

—

When Mr. Roosevelt started on his memorable outing trip in 1905 he left Secretary Taft "sitting on the lid" in Washington. A newspaper man writing at this time had to say:

"Mr. Taft sits on the lid with the air of one who is used to it, attending to matters of import. As acting President, acting Secretary of State, and Secretary of War, he is keeping up an appearance in line with past performances. He has been attending to more subjects of great interest than fall to the lot of most Americans.

"When an ambassador of a foreign power, having in mind the making of a point for the mystification of other foreign powers, desires to take the United States into his confidence, he calls not at the State Department, but at the War Department, knowing that when he is speaking to Secretary Taft he is speaking to the President."

—

Occasionally when in Washington Mr. Taft plays golf at the Chevy Chase Club. That he does not do so oftener is due only to the fact that he cannot spare the time. When at his summer home at Murray Bay, Quebec, he plays golf for three hours every morning.

One day, after making the rounds of the links at Chevy Chase, Mr. Taft attempted to comply with one of the customs of the place and stepped on the daintily nickel-plated scales to test his weight. Two 100-pound weights and a fifty were placed on the scales, but of course the beam remained hard aloft, and the attendant was obliged to explain that the scales would not weigh more than 275 pounds.

"Why don't you have scales built to weigh men?" exclaimed Mr. Taft. "These scales are only boys' size."

—

The stilts have always come off when Mr. Taft arrived—that is, always with one exception. That happened in Russia. The Czar, with all his gorgeous staff and functionaries around him, was awaiting the arrival of the distinguished American secretary. He went on waiting—went on for half an hour. The only occasion that paralleled it in cosmic interruption was when Joshua did the same thing to the sun. It did not augur well for harmonious relations when the visitor, who would keep the Czar waiting should appear.

Meanwhile, Mr. Taft, descending from his railway car, had split at the knee the only pair of dress trousers his baggage supplied. Mrs. Taft, skilled housewife that she is, turned to with needle and thread and repaired damages. Mr. Taft donned those essential articles of attire and descended once more. That time both knees emerged from rents that were "like," one of his proud brothers has since explained, "a pair of Montana snowdrifts."

Hallie Erminie Rives, who was with the party, joined Mrs. Taft in second aid to the injured, while Mr. Taft sat solitary in a private compartment. It was hurried tailoring, for the Czar could not be expected to have quite the patience of Job.

At length, garbed in a long winter coat, the visitor appeared before the assembled dignitaries, walking with a rigidity that could have done credit to the dignity of a dozen European courts.

"I know just what Bill did," asserts his brother. "He smiled that smile of his, made his frank, heart-seizing apology, and then told Nicholas about those darned old pants. Maybe Nicholas flickered, just flickered, a suspicion of doubt. Then Bill carefully hitched into the limelight a knee or two and it was all right. They could start in talking about the future of China."

When Mr. Taft, on his tour of the world, found time to visit the Czar of Russia, though he had to disappoint the Kaiser, the one European monarch who was most eager to meet him, Old World formality and diplomacy could have found all sorts of ground for offense at the apparent neglect, but it didn't. Germany's Emperor and Germany's people remain quite as friendly now as though the famous adjuster of America's troubles and carried his genial personality to Berlin.

Perhaps the most notable achievement of this undiplomatic diplomat was the one he carried through so brilliantly in the visit of inspection of the Philippines by a party of seventy Congressmen and their wives under his personal ciceronage.

"Nope!" they quote Speaker Cannon as declaring with familiar emphasis. "Nope! Not for your Uncle Joseph. And let me tell you fellows that if Bill Taft gets you out on the Pacific with him you're goners, sure."

He did get them out with him, however, and he kept that amazing omnium gatherum at perfect peace and in a state of positively grateful happiness until it returned, filled with information which, like his own on the subject of the islands, had been gained through its own eyes.

—

Capt. Seth Bullock, plainsman and friend of President Roosevelt, paid in homely phrase one of the highest tributes that could be paid to any human being, when he was asked his opinion of Mr. Taft. Capt. Seth has the plainsman's reticence of speech. He could not gush if he tried.

"What is it about Taft that you like?" he was asked.

He hemmed and hawed before he answered, "He's simply all right. He's a man you don't have to be introduced to twice."

—

During Mr. Taft's last visit to the isthmus, Mrs. Squires, wife of the American Minister at Panama, being desirous of giving a dinner which should rival all the 'possom and other feasts that have tempted the palate of the President-elect, ordered from New York a magnificent feast, which, under the guardianship of a high-priced chef, was brought down on the steamer Colon.

All the diplomats in Panama had been asked to the affair, but when the day arrived a terrific "norther" was blowing and the twelve ships that reached the isthmus anchored outside the harbor. There, in full sight, was the Colon, the succulent spread stowed away in her hold, with the gale whipping the sea into a mountainous lather between.

Mrs. Squires was in deep despair. She called up Hiram Slifer, general manager of the Panama Railroad, and said excitedly:

"Heaven knows, Mr. Slifer, I have to get that dinner for to-night."

"Heaven, madam," replied Mr. Slifer, "is the only place whence help can come. I cannot send out a tug even for passengers and mail, and the dinner must wait."

The dinner did wait two days. Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Taft ate native home fare and enjoyed the joke.

—

In his practical work of establishing civil government in the Philippines, Mr. Taft was especially interested in the conditions of life of the native woman.

"Her legal rights are, perhaps, greater in the islands than are those of the American woman," he once said in an interview.

Mr. Taft then discussed the tasks of the women, and expressed his regret that they did not use more modern appliances in their labor. It was most interesting to watch the simple, sympathetic air with this large and important person settled down to discuss the domestic tribulations of the little yellow women of the tropics.

"In washing, for instance," continued Mr. Taft, "their methods are unnecessarily laborious, though picturesque to watch. They go down to the river banks—oh, just crowds of them, and you can't imagine what a sight it is—and beat the clothes with sticks. Well, the clothes are fine to look at when washed, but it's hard on their longevity"—with a rueful smile—"and besides, it's a hard way of working, especially when you consider that they could import things that would make life much easier."

—

Dignified on the bench, Mr. Taft's sedate manner was tempered by a suggestion of kindliness and charity that he could not conceal. One of those associated intimately with him in the days when he wore the judicial ermine has said: "He was Judge Taft in the courthouse, but Bill Taft away from there." His interest in young men, particularly in young lawyers, was shown frequently. The law school of which he was dean was a source of great pride to him. One day, while hearing a case in the Federal courtroom, he saw five law students whom he knew, sitting in rear seats. "Bring five chairs up here," he said to an attendant, and then told his secretary to invite the five students to sit beside him, a mark of distinction and honor. The youngsters thought the secretary was joking, but he pointed to the chairs and convinced them. So the five, embarrassed but elated, took seats beside the judge. "I thought you'd be able to hear better up here," was Taft's explanation.

Riding on horseback is one of Mr. Taft's chief pastimes. On account of his size his friends always have made commiserating jokes in regard to the beasts which Taft rides.

While he was governor general of the Philippines Mr. Taft made a long and tedious journey up the mountains to Bengat. The department at Washington knew of the trip, and Mr. Taft reported by cable direct to Secretary of State Root:

"Arrived safe and sound after riding 100 miles muleback."

Secretary Root replied like this:

"Congratulations on your health. How is the mule?"

—

"O-o-oh, Willie!"

It was the voice of William H. Taft's brother calling for him from the window of his room at Yale in the '70's, and it sounded sweetly, clearly, and homely on the quiet and studious air. But it awakened such a multitude of echoes as nature has provided in no other spot and at no other era of the human race.

"O-o-o-o-oh, W-i-ll-e-e-e-e-e!"

From all the other windows round about a chorus of 400 voices took up the yell with a gorgeousness of variety almost deafening and wholly humiliating.

That was the last time any of William H. Taft's family ventured to call him "Willie" within a radius of ten miles of Yale. Undergraduate opinion had showed itself too overwhelming in disapproval. His name became "Bill"—just plain "Bill"—and to Yale ever since "Bill" he has remained.

The men who most frequently called Taft Bill during the Yale days were the members of his class—'78. On the day of his inauguration as President of the United States they are going to have a class meeting at Washington, where, after more than thirty years, the whooping school-fellows of those vociferous days will call up with him what remains of the youth that was then so gloriously green.

—

The native Filipinos fairly worship Mr. Taft. They have a way of calling him "Santo," and they think in order to be a great man in America one must have a gigantic stature. But the French guides of Canada, who know how to fish and catch them, do not worship Taft as they do some of the trout experts who invade the woods.

One day when he had been out for two hours with his guide whipping a Canadian stream, Mr. Taft returned with a fine basket of fish. His friends were congratulating him on his skill. The guide said nothing. Taft smiled genially when they asked how many he had caught. He waved his hand at the guide and said:

"The squadron under my command caught twelve fish."

—

The man who after being duly impressed with the size of Mr. Taft forms the opinion that he is not athletic will find himself sadly mistaken. Once there was a gentleman of this sort, who thought it would be a huge joke to inveigle the genial Taft into a game of golf under the broiling sun of the Philippine Islands. When, after Mr. Taft had set the pace in following the ball over a nine-mile course, and was then trailed by his friend for a five-mile walk to a plantation house on the mountain side to get refreshment in a cup of tea, the joker was a sadder, but a wiser man. He found Mr. Taft as strong and fresh and smiling as a sea-shore breeze, while he himself—well, the joke was on him with a vengeance, for he was forced to lay abed the next day.

—

Those familiar with the Taft home are agreed that Mr. Taft is "house broke" to an ideal degree. He can hook Mrs. Taft's dresses up the back without missing a single eye, and the things he could tell you about bringing up a baby would make up a successful series of Sunday newspaper features. "Bill" Taft was just brought up that way.

Mr. Taft left Washington to spend a quiet day with the old folks at Millbury, Mass., and on reaching Worcester he found that close connections were out of the question. He wanted to get home to mother, and this did not suit him, so he boarded a trolley car that ran Millburyward. From the end of this line he walked in on his mother and relatives about 9:30 in the evening, several hours before he was expected. "Trust Bill Taft to get home," was the comment of a friend who had known Taft as a boy.

The following day an enterprising newspaper reporter heard the following bit of conversation between Mr. Taft and Aunt Delia:

"I came mighty near being born in Millbury, didn't I, Aunt Delia?"

"Indeed, you did," laughed Aunt Delia. "You did the nearest thing to it, I remember—had the measles here the first time you came on a visit."

This is the kind of material put of which goes to make a first-class family man. It explains why in all the Taft travels Mrs. Taft has been able to make world trips without the hampering personality of a maid—which, anyhow, her common sense told her Mr. Taft couldn't well afford.